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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [JA](#) [RU](#)
SUBJECT: FUKUDA-PUTIN PERSONAL LETTERS AIM TO PUT
JAPAN-RUSSIA RELATIONSHIP ON "HIGHER DIMENSION"

REF: 07 TOKYO 05019

Classified By: Charge d' Affaires, a.i. Joseph R. Donovan. Reasons 1.4
(B) (D)

11. (C) Summary. Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and Russian President Vladimir Putin recently exchanged personal letters in which both sides agreed to move Tokyo-Moscow relations to a "higher dimension," Foreign Ministry and Russian Embassy contacts tell Embassy Tokyo. Foreign Minister Masahiko Koumura hopes to visit Russia in March, reciprocating Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's October 2007 stopover in Tokyo. Japanese officials expect to hold a Japan-Russia bilateral summit on the margins of the G8 Hokkaido Summit in July, MOFA reported. Neither side, however, expects to make progress on the Northern Territories issue, a subject the Russian Embassy characterized as "not up for discussion."
End Summary

Fukuda-Putin Letter

12. (C) On February 6, MOFA Russia Division Principal Deputy Director Kotaro Otsuki confirmed reports, featured on the front page of leading Japanese newspapers, that Russian President Vladimir Putin had responded positively to a personal letter sent by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda. Otsuki said the letter, which had been handed to the Russian President by leading LDP member Yoshiro Mori during a December Moscow visit, called on Putin to move the bilateral relationship to a "higher dimension."

13. (C) According to Otsuki, the Fukuda letter contained no new proposal on resolving the Northern Territories (NT) issue. The correspondence outlined Japan's general view on the bilateral relationship and signaled Tokyo's intention to strengthen cooperation on a wide variety of issues. Otsuki added that Japanese officials expect, but have not yet reached agreement, to hold a bilateral summit with the new Russian President who will attend the Hokkaido Lake Toya G8 Summit in July. Fukuda's letter demonstrated Japan's

readiness and willingness to improve Japan-Russia ties, Otsuki concluded.

14. (C) Putin's reply highlighted Russia's intention to strengthen relations with Japan in a reciprocal manner, Otsuki related. In MOFA's view, President Putin "agreed with Fukuda's initiative," to "raise the relationship to a higher dimension." Foreign Ministry officials interpreted Putin's response as meaning that Moscow is prepared to work cooperatively to resolve the NT issue through mutual action. The letter exchange also confirmed each nation's intention to fulfill conditions outlined in the Japan-Russia Action Plan which Putin and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi agreed to during a January 2003 Moscow summit. (Action Plan e-mailed to EAP/J.)

Moscow Visits

15. (C) Koumura hopes to travel to Moscow in March 2008, Otsuki observed. The planned visit, widely reported by Japanese media, was not new - Japan and Russia agreed to conduct a reciprocal visit during Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's October 2007 stay in Tokyo (Reftel). Otsuki said that visit dates had not been confirmed and would depend on the Diet's "tight" schedule.

16. (C) On February 7, the press quoted Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura as saying that a March or May

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Europe visit to meet with G8 leaders (including a possible Moscow trip) is "under consideration." Otsuki could not

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confirm that report and did not have any details about a possible Fukuda meeting with Putin.

NT Not up for Discussion

17. (C) Russian Embassy First Secretary Yurii Yuriev confirmed much of MOFA's account regarding the Fukuda-Putin letters. According to Yuriev, Putin does not oppose placing the bilateral relationship on a higher level, "if, by that, the Japanese side means on a level encompassing wide-ranging cooperation in different spheres." Regarding the NT issue, Yuriev noted that "our stance is quite clear - we strongly consider the Southern Kuriles to be Russian territory as one of the results of World War II, and these results are not up for discussion." Yuriev also confirmed that, last October, Lavrov extended an invitation to Koumura to visit Moscow, but that the dates had not yet been decided.
DONOVAN